WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

Sub a'

1. A signal conversion apparatus, comprising:

signal conversion means for converting an input signal to a converted signal;

determination means for detecting additional information added to said input signal and for determining whether or not said additional information indicates a use limitation for said converted signal; and

use limitation means for disabling said converted signal when said use limitation is copy prohibition or copy limitation.

2. A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said input signal is a video signal, and said signal conversion means is adapted to perform a signal conversion process selected from the group consisting of converting progressive scanning into interlaced scanning and converting interlaced scanning into progressive scanning.

3. A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said input signal is a video signal, and said signal conversion means is adapted to convert the number of scanning lines.

4.   A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said input signal is a video signal, and said signal conversion means is adapted to convert a signal format.

5.   A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said signal conversion means is adapted to perform a signal format conversion selected from the group consisting of converting a high-definition television signal into a standard television signal and converting a standard television signal into a high-definition television signal.

6.   A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said signal conversion means is adapted to perform a signal format conversion selected from the group consisting of converting a video signal of an image data format for computer processing into a high-definition television signal or a standard television signal; and converting a high-definition television signal or a standard television signal into a video signal of an image data format for computer processing.

7.   A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said signal conversion means is adapted to convert said signal format from an analog video signal into a digital video signal.

8. A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said signal conversion means is adapted to convert a data compression method.

9. A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said input signal is an audio signal.

10. A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said signal conversion means is adapted to convert a sampling frequency of said audio signal.

11. A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said signal conversion means is adapted to convert a data compression method for said audio signal.

12. A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said signal conversion means is adapted to convert an analog audio signal into a digital audio signal.

13. A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising notification means for notifying a user of said use limitation for said converted signal.

14.   A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 1,
wherein said additional information is digital watermark
information, and said determination means detects said digital
watermark information and determines whether or not said
digital watermark information indicates copy prohibition or
copy limitation.

15.   A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 1,
wherein said input signal is a digital signal.

16.   A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 1,
wherein a plurality of different types of additional pieces of
information are added to said input signal, and when said
determination means determines that one of said plurality of
different types of additional pieces of information indicates
copy prohibition or copy limitation, said use limitation means
disables said converted signal.

17.   A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 16,
wherein one of said plurality of different types of additional
pieces of information is digital watermark information.

18. A signal conversion apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said input signal is a digital signal provided after an encryption process is performed thereon.

19. A signal conversion method, comprising the steps of:

converting an input signal to a converted signal;

detecting additional information added to said input signal, and determining whether or not said additional information indicates a use limitation for said converted signal; and

disabling said converted signal when said use limitation is copy prohibition or copy limitation.

20. A signal conversion method according to claim 19, wherein said input signal is a video signal, and said signal conversion step performs a signal conversion process selected from the group consisting of converting progressive scanning into interlaced scanning and converting interlaced scanning into progressive scanning.

21. A signal conversion method according to claim 19, wherein said input signal is a video signal, and said signal conversion step converts the number of scanning lines.

22. A signal conversion method according to claim 19, wherein said input signal is a video signal, and said signal conversion step converts a signal format.

23. A signal conversion method according to claim 22, wherein said signal conversion step performs a signal format conversion selected from the group consisting of converting a high-definition television signal into a standard television signal and converting a standard television signal into a high-definition television signal.

24. A signal conversion method according to claim 22, wherein said signal conversion step performs a signal format conversion selected from the group consisting of converting a video signal of an image data format for computer processing into a high-definition television signal or a standard television signal; and converting a high-definition television signal or a standard television signal into a video signal of an image data format for computer processing.

25. A signal conversion method according to claim 22, wherein said signal conversion step converts said signal format from an analog video signal into a digital video signal.

26.　A signal conversion method according to claim 22, wherein said signal conversion step converts a data compression method.

27.　A signal conversion method according to claim 19, wherein said input signal is an audio signal.

28.　A signal conversion method according to claim 27, wherein said signal conversion step converts a sampling frequency of said audio signal.

29.　A signal conversion method according to claim 27, wherein said signal conversion step converts a data compression method for said audio signal.

30.　A signal conversion method according to claim 27, wherein said signal conversion step converts an analog audio signal into a digital audio signal.

31.　A signal conversion method according to claim 19, further comprising a notification step for notifying a user of said use limitation for said converted signal.

32. A signal conversion method according to claim 19, wherein said additional information is digital watermark information, and said detecting step detects said digital watermark information and determines whether or not said digital watermark information indicates copy prohibition or copy limitation.

33. A signal conversion method according to claim 19, wherein said input signal is a digital signal.

34. A signal conversion method according to claim 19, wherein a plurality of different types of additional pieces of information are added to said input signal, and said disabling step disables said converted signal when one of said plurality of different types of additional pieces of information indicates copy prohibition or copy limitation.

35. A signal conversion method according to claim 34, wherein one of said plurality of different types of additional pieces of information is digital watermark information.

36. A signal conversion method according to claim 19, wherein said input signal is a digital signal provided after an encryption process is performed thereon.